

Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



God's Supremacy *Versus* Man's Responsibility

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?

HOLDING THE FORT

A QUESTION FOR TODAY

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FAITH'S PRECIOUS GIFT

Megiddo Message

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Kenneth E. Flowerday, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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God's Supremacy Versus Man's Responsibility

IN THE SECOND year after the Israelites had left Egypt, and while they were encamped in the desert of Sinai, Moses felt that it was God's will for him to take a census of all the people, with the exception of the Levites. The members of this tribe were put in charge of everything that was sacred; they were to serve Aaron the priest in caring for the tabernacle, or tent of meeting, and all its appointments. It was their responsibility to carry it and its equipment whenever the children of Israel moved their location. They were to take down the tent and set it up, and wherever it was pitched they were to camp around it.

Anyone who interfered with their sacred duties was to be put to death.

Within the tribe of Levi the sons of Kohath drew an especially sacred task. Whenever camp was broken, Aaron and his sons would enter the tent of meeting, go forward to the sanctuary, remove the curtain, lay violet cloths over the Ark of the Covenant, and the various other sacred belongings—as it was death for anyone but the high priest to look upon or handle the holy things—wrap them up in leather, and put them on a sort of stretcher for the journey. All of these sacred objects then became the particular care of the Kohathites. So, when the chiefs of the twelve tribes brought their offerings of six wagons and six teams of oxen after the tent had been consecrated, Moses assigned no wagons to the Kohathites because of this special duty of theirs. As the book of Numbers states it, "To the sons of Kohath he gave none because they were charged with the care of the holy things which had to be carried on their shoulders." They needed no wagons because the objects which were their responsibility were much too sacred to be consigned to a baggage train; they had to be carried by the men themselves.

In applying to modern life the truth behind this ancient story, let it be noted in the first place that the sons of Kohath did not have to serve, they chose to. They could have requested some other duty; they could, presumably, have demurred. But they did not; they were willing to carry the sanctuary on their shoulders.

The willing acceptance of personal responsibility is always a part of God's will for your life and mine. In the service of the Kingdom no men are drafted as unwilling conscripts in a cause they hate; it is always a labor of love. Until a person learns that his rightful responsibilities must be met and chosen, he is simply not prepared to face his duties as a Christian.

God has placed us here as free moral agents. While His will is supreme He does not compel us, He does not use coercion. He merely places two choices before us and leaves us to make our own decision. We have complete freedom of choice. We can choose to serve God and comply strictly with His demands, and share in the consolation of complete resignation to His will, or we can go our own way, and do the things that seem right to our own mind. Both blessing and cursing, conditioned upon behavior, is the rule throughout the Scriptures.

Joshua, Moses' successor, after many faithful years in the service of God, and when nearing the end of his earthly career, was still unshaken in his belief in God's

fairness, of His liberality as an Employer, and of His benevolence toward His faithful employees. Declaring God's offer of free moral agency as to His service, he urged: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [or Jordan], and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24: 14, 15).

Joshua put it squarely up to each individual. They could choose to serve the Lord, or serve themselves. They could follow in the way of the heathen nations which God had driven out of the land; or they could render heartfelt obedience to the merciful God who had so lovingly led them through the wilderness, and to victory and peace. Joshua made the wise choice and he showed no hesitancy in recommending it to Israel—and to us. Oh, that we might always make the right choice!

Moses, the great emancipator and lawgiver was aware that God forces no one to serve Him, but leaves each individual to decide his own policy. In the latter part of Deuteronomy 29, Moses appraised Israel of the curses that should accompany infidelity, and departure from the service of the God of Israel. The Lord's displeasure should be kindled against them, the curses, as foretold, should come upon them. The Lord would root them out of their land in divine wrath, and in great indignation.

Then chapter 30 reveals God's absolute fairness, His mercy to the penitent, His flexibility of approach to His earthly children, as dictated by their reaction to His leading. "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee" (vs. 1—4). God's attitude toward them would change as their attitude toward Him changed.

Once this change of heart has occurred, and they should return and obey the Lord's voice, the curses then should fall upon the heads of their enemies, and be directed against those who hated them. But their fortunes in this respect depended wholly upon themselves. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . . I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (vs. 15, 19). God permitted them absolute freedom of choice, with no attempt on His part to influence that choice. The proposition here is identical with that set forth in Deut. 11: 26—28, and Israel could accept or reject it as they chose.

This principle of free choice was exemplified repeatedly through Israel's checkered career during the 450 years of the judges of Israel, as well as the centuries that followed in both its consolidated and divided states. When they obeyed God they enjoyed prosperity and peace with their neighbors, but when they refused to obey, disaster and wars overtook them. Climaxing these events came the first destruction of Jerusalem and the Captivity; but even in the midst of this sad calamity God still pleaded with them to return. It was said to Shallum, the son of Josiah, the last king of Judah who reigned in his own right (Jer. 22: 15), "Shalt thou reign, . . . did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?"

God gave an ultimatum to Judah through the astute prophet Isaiah, giving them the choice of two courses of action, and two results, but in no way limiting their freedom of choice: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (Isa. 1: 19, 20). They could choose willing obedience, and receive life; or rebellion and obstinacy, and reap judicial wrath.

Freedom of Choice During Apostolic Age

The case of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to Peter about the amount of money they had received from the sale of their property, is a clear-cut example of the freedom of choice God always permits. The Apostolic Age was a very special dispensation. Much was to be accomplished in a short time. The then-known world was to be evangelized in less than four decades. Jesus had commanded: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." To expedite this work, one arrangement employed was a community of goods. They sold their possessions and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet, and had all things common.

No movement ever made such phenomenal gains or had such far-reaching effects, as did the preaching of the gospel of Christ during the thirty-seven-year period from the Ascension until the close of the Jewish age, A. D. 70, neither did any movement ever have the remarkable backing of the Christian movement. God worked mightily with them with signs and wonders. The power of the Holy Spirit was felt everywhere the gospel message was preached. We must realize, however, that intimate possession of such divine power placed enormous responsibilities upon its possessors. They actually had tasted the heavenly gift, they had felt in their own bodies the thrill of supernatural powers; the demand for loyalty on their part should have been the highest ever required of any class of people, but even so they were not denied freedom of choice. Let us see!

Ananias and Sapphira had many acquaintances among the Christian community at Jerusalem. Some among these had property or other possessions, and in response to the plea of the Apostles, and at the request of the Holy Spirit, they sold them, and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet. Among these was a man named Joses, whom the Apostles surnamed Barnabas. Ananias and his wife felt that they should do the same, but wanted to think it over well before they took the step. They may have been getting along in years, at least they were old enough to be cautious. It is clear that their faith was not what it should have been. At any rate they felt they should keep a nest-egg, just in case. . . . The choice was

theirs, the arrangement was not arbitrary. They committed a heinous sin which cost them their lives. But it did not consist of their decision to keep a hold on some of the money. It was because they conspired together to lie to the Holy Spirit. Let us read the narrative:

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5: 1—4). Before the land was sold it was their own, and after it was sold, the money was theirs to do "as they pleased about it," as one of the newer versions words it. No, God never forces anyone to serve Him.

We Have Freedom to Sow as We Please

The apostle Paul is sometimes charged with being the father of the theory of predestination because of what he said in the 9th chapter of Romans, but he could not have meant what some people take him to have meant, without contradicting many other of his own statements. Galatians 6: 7, 8, stresses individual freedom, leaving no place for doubt. Man is free to sow as he chooses, and his reaping will be just according to what he sows. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." These words leave no place for imposed or predetermined results. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

If the theory of predestination were true, either the blessing or curse would be according to God's foreordination, and nothing that we as individuals could do would have anything to do with the results. Proverbs 3: 33 refutes this: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just."

Predestination and Freedom of Choice Incompatible

As to the message of Romans 9, the higher critics storm at this chapter. They think it teaches that God is not just, that in an impassioned mood He may harden people's hearts, and against their wills incline them to evil; that God foreordains one to be a vessel to honor, another to be a vessel to wrath. Now this does not seem possible. It seems that in reading this message we must fail to get the right understanding of what the apostle was saying.

A writer in the *New Commentary*, by Bishop Gore and others, speaking of Paul and his statements in Romans 9, has this to say: "The reformers of the 16th century failed to understand him just as their opponents failed, not only because they read him through the spectacles of St. Augustine, but because by no fault of their own they were out of touch with the Hebrew mind. With our new knowledge both of the Old Testament and of the Judaism of St. Paul's day, we have an opportunity which was denied to them. . . .

"It has been the purpose of this essay to show that, placed in its true historical context, (Paul's teaching)

is not difficult to understand; and that a true understanding of it provides us with a clear historical account of the development of the church's faith. . . There is no such thing as Paulism as distinct from Christianity; Paulism and Christianity are one."

The writer continues: "St. Paul's doctrine of predestination has its roots in the Old Testament. All things derive their being from God, and must serve His purpose. He has a purpose for His people, chosen to manifest His glory." Isaiah 41:8 gives an example of this: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

"He has a purpose for. . . the special instruments of His will whom He raises up." For example, Cyrus, the king of Persia. Isaiah 45:1 reads: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; . . to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." "And even for those enemies of His people whose 'fierceness turns to His praise,' " He has a purpose. He said to Pharaoh: "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth (Ex. 9:16). And God's purpose must be at last fulfilled. Isaiah makes this plain in ch. 55:10, 11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, . . so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The writer continues: "But the theism [religious belief] of the Old Testament is an ethical theism, and the divine sovereignty is everywhere regarded as consistent with human responsibility." Let us impress that point on our minds, the divine sovereignty is "everywhere regarded as consistent with human responsibility." "Though no one can create his own vocation, [or calling] or should complain of the position in which God has placed him here, it is only too possible to forfeit the honor and blessing which high vocation brings; and, if we will not forward God's purpose willingly, we must forward it unwillingly by becoming monuments of His just severity."

Often in the Old Testament this teaching—on calling or vocation—does not look beyond the fortunes of this present world, as in the case of the blessings or curses that came upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah when they obeyed or disobeyed, but it stands unchanged when the hope of eternal salvation goes with it. With Paul God's purpose is seen as one of far horizons, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the chosen instrument of its fulfillment. "St. Paul thinks of God's predestination and election as resting upon the Lord Himself, and 'in Him' upon those members of His body who are to be conformed to His likeness." He has predestined that we be conformed to the image of His Son.

But still the vocation, or calling, is from God alone, however, the high calling does not carry final salvation with it.

As an example, we read in II Tim. 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Election does not mean salvation; "The elect members of Christ may fall from Him; and, if their membership ceases, their election ceases with it, and others

must take their places." Once in grace is not necessarily always in grace. Paul taught this principle in Romans 11, as he elaborated on the Jewish branches being broken off that the Gentile branches might be grafted on, and, conversely, that the Gentile branches, if unproductive, could also be broken off, and the natural branches be grafted back on. That this is Paul's general teaching no one familiar with his writings can doubt.

"But," says our commentator, "it may be urged with great force that St. Paul is not always consistent with himself; and that in Romans 9—and, if there, perhaps elsewhere—he does, like St. Augustine and Calvin, make salvation dependent upon God's arbitrary will, and sacrifice human freedom to the divine sovereignty." But from what precedes it "the charge seems unlikely to be true." Let us note that point, from the other things Paul has said, the idea that he made salvation dependent upon God's arbitrary will, "seems unlikely to be true." Most emphatically, it is *not* true!

We often quote Peter to the effect that Paul wrote things "hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Might we not add to this Paul's own words in II Cor. 11:6; "Though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge"? Being "rude in speech" we could easily misunderstand him. If we consider the context in Romans 9, the difficulty will largely pass away. It has been suggested that, had Paul foreknown the use St. Augustine and others would make of his words, he would have been more guarded in their use. But so utterly false a doctrine as predestination never entered his mind.

We should observe that Paul is not here discussing the relation of the divine sovereignty to human freewill. God never reverses Himself by taking away man's right of free choice. Paul obviously is answering a Jewish objection to the doctrine that he preaches, and the objection is this: "In maintaining that the Jewish people have forfeited their place in the divine purpose, (he) is charging God with unfaithfulness to His promise." The Jewish objector says: "'God has pledged Himself to Israel, His people, and He cannot go back on His word' . . .

"First, (Paul) shows that God has never thus sacrificed His freedom. Secondly, he shows that God's present rejection of Israel, so far as it exists, is morally justified. Thirdly, he shows that it is only for a time, [perhaps we should say, selective], and is being made the means to universal blessing." Through it the Gentiles were given the chance to work for eternal life.

"It is only when, like St. Augustine and Calvin, we attempt to individualize what in the Bible is spoken of the *members of the Church corporately*, and substitute for the thought of election to privilege, the thought of an *arbitrary appointment to final salvation*, that St. Paul's language rightly repels us."

Paul never taught predestination.

A writer in the *Interpreter's Bible* advances the thought that the Jewish Christians at Rome may have felt some hostility against Paul, and such would not be surprising. "Any man who has served two opposing sides with such complete devotion has given hostages to both his opponents. Paul's letters contain abundant evidence that he was often involved in controversy, and he repeatedly has to correct false impressions of his position, or to deny views unjustly attributed to him."

Romans Nine does not Teach Predestination

Now let us study Romans 9 before the backdrop that we have just established that Paul was speaking of the "calling" by God, which the Jews thought was especially theirs, and not a predestined life-pattern. Beginning with the first of the chapter, Paul speaks in burning words of his passionate love for his nation, and realizes most fully the signal glory of their position. The theory has been advanced that Paul may have been falsely accused of disloyalty to, or indifference about, the welfare of his brethren according to the flesh, and that was why he began this chapter as he did. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness by the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (vs. 1-3).

We cannot conceive of Paul's being willing to be accursed from Christ, His gospel, His service, His hope of eternal life. It seems to be merely a figure of speech to emphasize his deep concern for his brethren. A footnote in the *New Catholic Edition* of the Bible points this out: "So great was St. Paul's longing for the salvation of his own kinsmen that he would make any possible sacrifice to that end, even to the extent of being separated from Christ, if it were permissible to entertain such a desire. That these words are merely an emphatic way of declaring his great devotion to his people, and that they are not to be taken literally, is evident from what St. Paul has just said in the closing verses of the chapter before." He was "persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, . . . nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," should be able to separate him "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 9:3 in the *Lamsa Translation*, reads: "I have prayed that I myself might be accursed because of Christ for the sake of my brethren." "Because of Christ," in place of "from Christ." The parallel with Moses' appeal on the behalf of his apostate people now becomes clear: "Yet now if thou wilt, forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Ex. 32:32). "But Moses asks that if they cannot be saved with him, he may be allowed at least to perish with them; whereas Paul prays that he may lose what he has but what they lack, provided his loss will mean their gain."

Then in the following verses Paul proceeds with his thesis, to show that God has not broken His covenant with Israel, by defining Israel as God's loyal worshippers from every nation. "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are the Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (v. 3). Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh had much to recommend them from a human standpoint, but God does not see as man sees, hence He sees them very differently.

"Not as though the word of God had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." As a nation the Jews were unbelieving, unworthy of God's mercy,

but God was not dealing with them as a nation, and among them were individuals who were striving to fit themselves into God's plan of salvation. God recognized these. "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (vs. 4-8).

Paul denies that God's promise to Israel has come to nothing. God never pledged Himself to the whole nation. "From the first He chose some, and not others, for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose; and that in a way that emphasized His freedom to choose whom He would, apart from all self-righteous human claims. Is there then, injustice if He does the same now?"

In the *Interpreter's Bible* we find this comment on the portion of Romans 9 just cited. "Paul has just suggested that the Jew's rejection of Christ, and therefore of their salvation, . . . is the source of the keenest personal anguish. . . But, he now says, whatever happens one must not suppose that the word of God—namely, God's promise to the patriarchs—has failed. For a promise made to Israel does not necessarily mean a promise made to all Jews. Although the covenant was made with Abraham and his offspring (Gen. 12:7), it soon became apparent that only some of his descendants were involved, namely the sons of Isaac (Gen. 21:12-14).

"So, far from having broken His word by the calling of the Gentiles, He has kept it; He has done just what He said He would do." God is no respecter of persons or nationality. He takes good material wherever He finds it. "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

To be continued, next issue.

Your enemies may be formidable by their numbers, and by their power; but He who is with you is mightier than they.

* * * * *

Don't do right unwillingly
And stop to plan and measure;
'Tis working with the heart and soul
That makes our duty pleasure.

— ● —

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from page 11)

The symbolism of verse 17 seems to be a repetition of v. 12, it seems definitely to picture the long sleep of death that must intervene before Abraham with his seed could inherit the promised blessing. "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces." "When the sun went down, and it was dark," that is, his temporal life terminated, and he entered the long sleep of death, yet his situation would not be hopeless. A burning lamp, the assurance of a resurrection from the dead, would accompany his long sleep, and at the latter day with the patriarch Job he would see his Redeemer, and be released from the power of the grave, to enjoy throughout eternity the blessings Jehovah promised to him so long ago.

Wasted Words

If all that we say
in a single day,
With
Never a word
left out
Were printed each night
in clear black and white,
'Twould make
queer reading
no doubt.
And then, just suppose,
ere our eyelids we close,
We must read
the whole record through!
Oh, wouldn't we sigh
and wouldn't we try
A great deal less talking
to do?
And—I more than half think
that many a kink
Would be smoother
in life's tangled thread,
If half that we say
in a single day
Were left forever
unsaid!

—Author Unknown



It is truly said, and often, that "In the midst of life we are in death." It is as natural to die as to be born, and our cradle stands in our grave. Yet no man in his right senses ever really craved death. Men fear it as children fear the dark, and cling to life with every power of their whole being.

We assembled on April 4, to pay our last respects to a friend and sister, Marie F. Tuhro. The deceased was born August 5, 1863 to Jacob I. and Augusta Lowe Muhlbeier, at Brighton, New York. Both parents had immigrated from Germany.

Sister Tuhro is survived by one brother, Frank Muhlbeier of Rochester and five sisters: Mrs. George Seekins, Mrs. Rose Lanin, Mrs. George R. Leonard, Miss Louise Muhlbeier of Rochester and vicinity, and Mrs. James Robertson of Washington, D. C.

Our sister outlived man's allotted threescore and ten years by nearly 27 years, passing at the ripe age of 96 years. When our sister was born, the Battle of Gettysburg had been fought only thirty days before, and she was but four months old when President Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg address.

Sister Tuhro was attracted to the sound of God's Good News as proclaimed by our founder in the last years of his ministry (1908—12) and with her husband was a regular attendant at Megiddo Mission Church, until Mr. Tuhro's death in 1938. Shortly thereafter our sister took up residence much nearer the Megiddo Mission and continued to attend until a few years ago, always delighting in the things she heard.

Funeral services were conducted at the Megiddo Mission Church, Brother Kenneth E. Flowerday officiating. Interment was in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

What Shall it Profit a Man?

"FOR WHAT SHALL it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" There perhaps has never been a time when this question of Jesus recorded in Mark 8 has been so appropriate and yet of so little importance to the people of today. They simply do not think about it. But how much do we who are instructed in these things think about it? for remember our own ways and desires are a very large part of the "whole world" spoken of here, and one or more of these ways or desires may cause a person to trust most of all in the shining dollar. Man is so constructed that he is anxious to accumulate possessions. It is an ingrained human desire, and the ability to gather wealth is deeply revered by humanity.

Many of the temptations that come to us come in connection with the getting of money. The love of money is the root of all evil, or as one version gives it, a root of all kinds of evil. However, we must all have money. We need food and clothing and shelter and money is necessary for the purchase of these things. Money is not an evil in itself; money is, in fact, a very useful servant. It is bad only when it becomes the master, and the love of it is hurtful only because it can and often does crowd out the love of nobler things.

The Lord who knows our inclinations along this line has given some timely warnings which if heeded will guide us away from this pitfall. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." It alone can give length of days. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death. . . If riches increase set not your heart upon them," but instead "set your affections on things above," for "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

If we should be successful in amassing a considerable amount of money or property we know we could not enjoy it beyond this life which is short at best. "For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and having food and raiment let us be therewith content," for "godliness with contentment is great gain." Here within the meaning of these six words is to be found a profit beyond anything the human mind can conceive of, and by comparison, the gaining of the whole world, if this were possible, would seem as nothing. Why? Because there is no mention of length of days to enjoy it in.

The saving of the soul or life is the keeping it unspotted from the world and the fitting it for a place in that eternal Kingdom to be established on the earth. As a substitute for this all external accomplishments and rewards are as but apples of Sodom, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth. Therefore, "O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

* * * * *

Charity encompasses the sum total of all Christian virtues. Purity, like charity, is a word signifying completeness; for as charity signifies everything we must do to obtain salvation, so purity exemplifies the former well done.

Holding the Fort

UPON THE PAGES of Holy Writ we find recorded the successful undertakings of some of the greatest men and women that ever lived. They were men and women of character, who were not afraid of hard work and adversity, for they had a desired goal in view. It was the height of their ambition to attain unto an existence that would extend on and on throughout eternity, when life will be sweeter and happiness will always endure.

They obtained a full realization of what God required of them, and succeeded in carrying out His wishes to the very letter. The record of their lives is written, not to fill a book but to be an evidence to us that we too might have that same goal in view and make ourselves worthy of sharing with them the same reward they knew would be waiting for them beyond the tomb.

The secret of their success lies in the fact that once they began treading the paths of righteousness, they never turned back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. They realized that the Christian's life is one long battle fought against mankind's most insidious foe, "the deceitful heart," and that it requires an ample amount of courage, yes, far more than is needed in carnal warfare; for we not only have to take the fort, but once taken it is a continuous job to hold it.

We might single out from our supply of weights a certain besetment, and pledge ourselves to overcome it. We watch diligently for a while that it does not once defile us. Thus the fort has been taken on that point, and we turn our attention to another evil to which we are prone. While working on this one we neglect the other, and so doing, lose the fort. But if we keep a constant watch on every point whereby we might become tempted to slip, we will never loosen our hold after once we attain it.

The fight against sin is a fight unto death, even the death of the "old man," and if we ever expect to become a conqueror we must carry on this fight joyfully, never once murmuring or complaining against the One who has called us to be a good soldier. When the Children of Israel murmured against Moses, their carcasses fell in the wilderness; and how shall we escape a similar fate if we are doing likewise?

In Paul's letter to Timothy we do not hear him grumbling and finding fault over his trials, but instead he exhorts him to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He also saw the necessity for him to keep

aloof from the outside world, and not become entangled with the affairs of this life, but as a good soldier aim to satisfy his Commander.

If we would stand in that day a conqueror, we must wear the armor now. This armor is not man-made, but from God; it is given to us on the right hand and on the left: it is our strong tower, our only protection in such a time as this. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." Without this important piece of armor, we as spiritual soldiers would be doomed to certain death, for we could not possibly dodge the enemies' darts. The breastplate protects a very vital part and should be well constructed. This spiritual breastplate is such, for it cannot be penetrated; it is absolutely safe and durable; it is the right doing of saints.

Above all we must take the "shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And let us not forget a protection for the head, "the helmet of salvation," and the two-edged "sword of the spirit," the Word of God, which is quick and powerful and will slay the enemy if we but use it. We should be watchful and never go unarmed or without this protection; for remember, the enemy always attacks at the weakest point.

If you would successfully hold the fort, take heed on which road you travel. Never be lured into taking a by-way, but keep on the strait road. This you will always do if you follow your leader. Watch every step you take; danger is near. Keep your eyes straight before you: never take a backward look; the prize is ahead of you. Remember you are under the Captain's orders, and try to give Him the best that is in you.

We might feel that we have the situation well in hand; that we have brought every thought into subjection and the new man has at last gained the victory over the old, but here we must remember I Cor. 10: 12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Let us ever remember that the enemy we encounter is wily, and that we are out to slay or be slain. Therefore let us not be negligent in performing this warfare, that we may one day hear from the lips of our just and righteous Commander these words, "I have put you to the test, and found you more than a conqueror."

Prayer on Entering Church

Heat and burden of the day,
Help us, Lord, to put away.
Let no crowding, fretting cares
Keep earth-bound our spirit's prayers.
Carping criticism take
From our hearts, for Jesus' sake,
In this little hour that we
Spend in fellowship with Thee.
Search us keenly, Lord, we pray,
Lest we leave Thy house today
Through our stubbornness unfed—

By the true and Living Bread—
Lest we know not that we thirst.
Selfishness that we have nursed
Through the years, O blessed Lord,
Smite it with Thy two-edged sword.
Make us over! Make us kind.
Let no lonely stranger find
Lack of friendly handclasp, or
Pass unwelcomed through the door.
Let the whole week sweeter be
For this hour we spend with Thee.

Another New Year

The springtime observance of the double festivity, commemorating the Nativity of our Lord and coming King, and the dawn of the New Year was an occasion of joy at "the little white church." Visiting members from Georgia, Iowa, Washington, D. C., New Jersey, Ohio, and various points in our own State joined with our Rochester congregation in observing "the month Abib."

The season's opening presentation on Sunday Evening Mar. 27, "Heroes of God," depicting some of the sons of God through the ages whose lives earned the title, was enjoyed by an attentive audience.

The children's program on Monday afternoon was, as usual, a joyous hour-and-a-half. "The Gospel Choo-choo Train," sung and demonstrated by two small lads was a real "relax-a-cizor," especially when the younger of the two, a chubby four-year-old, so industriously kept one wheel rolling even if he couldn't gesticulate two. The musical numbers were ably and creditably done.

A high light of the concluding program, Monday evening, was a family playlet, "No Room for Jesus." The finale, a New Year's address by the pastor, "Day-tight Compartments" urged the hearers to live each day of the oncoming year in fully consecrated lives, shutting out the misdeeds etc. of the yesterdays, borrowing none of the fears and out-of-hand probabilities of life's tomorrows, but to hoard up and make the very most of today's opportunities.



A Question for Today

ARE WE REDEEMING the time although surrounded with much that is evil? This is a serious question, and requires that we take heed and consider every word and action that all is to the glory of God. And others seeing our good works may also be enabled to glorify God.

It takes courage to stand up for the right even in our daily tasks for we are to be honest and upright in all that we do, and we need more courage to stand up for all the Truth requires at all times. The prophet Isaiah tells us "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." We must keep a zone of silence about us, as the noisy waves dash against our tower of safety, and let patience possess our souls. How much energy is wasted in mere talk that should be spent in action. One who represses the love of talk lays up a fund of spiritual strength; also one who comes out and is separate, going "from the presence of a foolish man when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." Abide in Christ, while we cease from our own work and let God work, think, pray, teach and walk in us. Then we will be kept free from exhaustion of body or mind. Self must be cast out and Jesus be placed on the throne within, that we may be all glorious within. Then only shall we find the Truth that makes us free.

Amid the clamors of time, let us catch the bell-note of the Eternal. One sound always comes to the ear that is

open; it is the steady drum-beat of duty. It says to you, "Do your work." Be always "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Keep step to that drum-beat and the dullest march is taking you home.

We do not dare to become so absorbed in our own life, so wrapped up in listening to the sound of our own counsel, and the mingled sound of the joys and sorrows of the world that we miss hearing the still small voice. We must be ever alert and hear the Eternal's voice above the clamor of the crowd and the shouting of our own desires. We must follow His call that we may be ready and meet for the Master's use. Work to be clean in Christ's eyes and the unnumbered hosts of angels coming with Him. His hand is held out still in mercy to those who will listen. If we want that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we must keep our eyes straight forward on the goal with the words of Truth kept in mind all the time.

Great and innumerable are the blessings we enjoy because of the sun's rising each day, radiating its wondrous light, its genial warmth, its abounding vitality for all, but how far surpassing all these will be the blessings when Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arises with healing in His beams! This is our hope and the only thing that will dispel all the dark clouds of earth. We know that they will now continue to grow thicker and heavier till all is swept away by the mighty whirlwind of the Lord. Then shall the Sun of righteousness, this Bright and Morning Star, shine forth in transcendent meridian beauty bringing health and—blessings incomparable for all. Let the prophets with poetic eloquence highlight the picture.

"The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them;
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.
It shall blossom abundantly,
And rejoice even with joy and singing.

"For in the wilderness shall waters break out
And streams in the desert.
And the parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.

"And my people shall dwell in peaceable habitations,
And in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.
And the work of righteousness shall be peace,
And the effect of righteousness
Quietness and assurance forever.

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth;
In that day shall there be one Lord
And His name one.
"And the city had no need of the sun,
Neither of the moon to shine in it;
For the glory of God did lighten it,
And the Lamb is the light thereof."

Would a merciful Providence have given us talents, without designing that we should exert them?

Meditations On the Word

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (II Cor. 13: 5).

Deception seems to be one of the most common weaknesses of human nature. This weakness shows itself primarily in our attempt to deceive others. Being so much easier to assume a virtue than to discipline ourselves until we actually possess that virtue, the practice of two-facedness is readily developed. Continued long and persistently enough, self-deception naturally follows. The picture of ourselves which we have attempted to paint for others is so appealing that in the course of time it is the only image of ourselves that we can see. Our sight becomes so perverted that whenever we turn our gaze inward we see a fine looking fellow without a single deformity or blemish of any consequence—surely we are as good as anybody, we say.

This line of reasoning may satisfy the man in the street, who has no ambition for anything beyond this life. He finds it unnecessary to recognize a Supreme Being. He is a "law unto himself," and need take orders from no one. He is confident that when his short career of life terminates, that will end all for him anyway; so why not make the traveling as easy as possible?

But the man who cherishes the hope of obtaining something more than this short life, sees things from a vastly different angle. He knows that self-deception and self-destruction are synonymous. He may succeed in deceiving others by appearing what he is not, may even deceive himself into believing he is better than he is; but he cannot fool God, "for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed"; and "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (I Sam. 2: 3; Gal. 6: 7).

Laxity and the tendency to lay down the oars and drift with the current, are trends against which the successful Christian must ever be alert. God never sleeps. The ear of the recording angel is always attuned to hear the words we utter, and our record is written accordingly. "Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139: 3, 4).

A thought seems a very small thing, and what sin could we more easily condone in self than an occasional wandering thought? But remember, even one such thought can be fatal. All our thoughts are known to Him "with whom we have to do." He warns through the prophet Ezekiel (11: 5), "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them." How foolish then to try to deceive Him! King David's touching prayer of thanksgiving after the people had so willingly dedicated themselves and offered their treasure for the building of the house of God, as recorded in I Chron. 28: 9, voices the same idea: ". . . for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. . . ."

Now with these observations in mind, let us meditate on the lessons in applied Christianity contained in our memory verse: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." It is perfectly possible for our perverted heart to lead us to believe we are in the faith when we are not. It is one thing to think we are in the faith, and quite another to be able to "prove" our own selves by submitting the record of our daily deportment to the acid test of comparison with the demands of the Word. We may think we are living the Christian life, when the truth is that we are merely taking the line of least resistance, living on our reputation.

Constant checking up and comparison are essential to spiritual progress. It was the practical James who said (1: 25), "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Yes, he who looks into the law of faith or written Word, and looks for the purpose of seeing his deformities so he can correct them, has taken a step in the right direction, but he will not succeed if he stops at the first look. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein"—he not only looks, but continues to look. A realty company selling off building lots in a newly opened tract once employed as their slogan the words, "Every look means a lot." So one honest look into our heart may mean a lot, but a continual looking means a lot more. He that looks and continues to look lest some unsuspected evil appears, or some perverse habit fasten itself upon him, is the man that shall be blest in his deeds.

In the closing sentence of our meditation text the Apostle suggests the presence of a condition we rarely care to admit. If unable to judge ourselves by the fruits we bear, that lack reflects upon our character. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" A reprobate is defined as one "abandoned to sin; lost to all sense of duty; utterly depraved; profligate."

One does not have to be a superman to be able to judge and evaluate his standing in the divine life, but he does have to be an honest man. If we would be strictly honest with God, and look at our own shortcomings with the same critical eye as we would look at the sins of others, the process of arriving at the right answer would be simple. For example, the Word says: "Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger, . . . be put away from you" (Eph. 4: 31); and, "great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119: 165): now if amid the trying scenes of a busy day we can keep patient and serene, allowing nothing to ruffle us, and if able to keep it up day after day through storm or calm, we have proved ourselves on that point.

Again we read, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge" (Prov. 14: 7). Should we find ourselves in the company of a group of people who do not recognize this command, but are indulging freely in jesting and foolish talking—or worse still in filthy and corrupt communication—and we have the courage to show our disapproval by walking right away from such a group, we have another evidence that Christ, or His truth, is dwelling in us.

Tests such as these could be made with every commandment affecting our daily walk, and such self-examination will show us our true standing in the spiritual life.

Questions and Answers

"For what sins did Jesus die?"

Jesus' teaching was the acme of practicality. He taught individual responsibility, "not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." He stressed the need for purity of heart: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He demanded perfection of character, leaving no loopholes for the well-meaning but indolent life seeker. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

In view of the foregoing where is there any place left for a blood atonement or a propitiatory sacrifice? There is no differentiation between the types of sins for which Jesus might die. One school of thought, recognizing the repeated demands for holy living and a thorough self-cleansing, senses the inconsistency of the belief in the redemptive work of Christ, and so apply His death for the sins of others to the sins they committed before learning the Christian Way. But this latter concept is no more realistic than the former, for "where there is no law there is no transgression." Men are not held responsible for what they did or failed to do before they covenanted to serve God.

The only reasonable explanation is that given by Peter in I Peter 1:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Christ died for us as an example that we should have an added impetus to die to sin as He died to sin. Romans 6:10, 11 sets the pattern in words that are clear and understandable. Speaking of Christ, Paul says: "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead indeed unto sin*, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ died for our sins as an example to us, as a means of reconciling us to God. Romans 5:10 is specific: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

"I would like to have a better understanding of Genesis 15, especially the symbolism of vs. 12 and 17. I never could get to even half understand this."

In the first of the chapter the Lord encourages Abram or Abraham, as he was later called, commanding him for the godly life he was trying to lead. The chapter contains the promise of an heir to Abraham (vs. 2—6), and a further promise, emphasized by a solemn covenant, of the possession of the land of Canaan (vs. 7—21). Abraham's natural anxiety as to the fulfillment of God's previous promises is expressed in the complaint that he has no son, and that in any case his possessions will not continue in his seed, but will pass out of his family to his steward. In answer to this he receives the Divine assurance that a son shall be born to him, and that his descendants shall be as numerous as the stars. Abraham's faith is shown by his implicit trust in the certain fulfillment of God's promise against all appearances to the contrary.

Beginning at v. 7 the Lord prepares to unveil His promise to Abraham. "And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." Then in v. 8 Abraham asked



the Lord for proof—that was a form of safeguard God never condemned anyone for seeking—and He proceeds to give him proof by means of the ancient form of an oath. The promise of the ultimate possession of Canaan is now made binding by a solemn covenant into which Jehovah deigns to enter with His faithful servant. For the covenant ritual see Jer. 34:18—20, where the divided victims symbolize the fate which will befall either party who violates a covenant. Here, since God Himself makes the covenant, the division must include the idea of sharing the divided victims as a symbol of sharing the obligation to observe the covenant.

We must observe that the covenant made with Abraham embraced much more than a promise of the literal land of Canaan as a possession to Abraham's physical seed. It was said to him: "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:4). This promise occurs four times in Genesis, also in Acts 3:25 and Gal. 3:8. Romans 4:11 carries it still further by saying of Abraham: "that he might be the father of all them that believe." Believers, irrespective of nationality, rather than his physical offspring, are counted as his seed. And they are promised the earth as an inheritance. Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; 115:16.

In Gen. 13:14, 15 we find God's promise to Abraham: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." But this promise was more than a local promise, it covered more than the fortunes of Abraham during his mortal life, and his literal offspring.

Hence when Abraham queried: "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Gen. 15:8), he was especially speaking of that future possession for his spiritual offspring, all believers, their ultimate inheritance of the earth. And the Lord said to him: "Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not." Now after Abraham had set the stage for the execution of the oath, the Lord proceeded to inform him of the things he needed to know. The fulfillment of that promise was not to be immediate, many years must intervene, and much history must be enacted before it would meet its fulfillment.

Verse 12 reads: "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." This symbol seems to indicate that the deep sleep of death must come between him and his reception of the promised possession. The Lord now indicates some events that definitely must be fulfilled before Abraham's seed should even enter the first phase of their inheriting the land: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward they shall come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again."

(Continued on page 6)

Faith's Precious Gift

Hebrews 11:1

Faith is the substance whence we glean
The joy that hope imparts;
The evidence of things not seen
Implanted in our hearts.
This faith is given by one whose love
Can never lead us wrong;
And while we by His influence move,
Its evidence grows strong.
He gives it not to take away,
For every heart he knows;
All those who love Him and obey,
Their gladness overflows.
Not even pain's depressing power,
Which often intervenes,
Can faith's bright lamp of gladness lower:
It then still brighter beams,
'Tis thus those beams of living light
Do their attraction spread,
That others walking in the night
Are by its brightness led
To seek the things they once despised
And thought of little worth;
And then the Word of God is prized
Beyond all things on earth.
Faith has no doubtings, seeks no signs,
Though hope is still deferred:
It neither murmurs nor repines,
But takes God at His Word.
Faith sees He truly will fulfill
The promises divine;
The tide of sin and sorrow still,
In His appointed time.
Our faith a mighty agent is,
Our lives to exercise;
To fit us for the realms of bliss,
And God's great goodness prize.
Her evidence doth light instil,
In radiance to shine;
An inward monitor to fill
Our hearts with thoughts divine.
Faith is the anchor of our hope
Wherever we may roam;
And like a life buoy bears us up
Above the tossing foam.
Faith doth no disappointment bring,

No causes for regret;
It makes us to rejoice and sing,
And every care forget.
Faith is the index of the Word,
And the appendix too,
By which our hearts to life are stirred,
Our vigor to renew.
Faith on the mountain top will bloom,
And in the desert drear,
It doth its strings of gladness tune,
When none but God is near.
And when among the busy throng
It keeps us leal and true,
Its silent influence makes us strong
To suffer and to do.
Faith cannot sink, whatever weight
Or pressure is applied,
Because from God it emanates,
A gift that doth abide.
What power can measure Daniel's faith
When in the lion's den?
He knew that God would keep him safe,
Whoever might condemn.
Faith, ever since the world began,
By God hath been bestowed;
And all His promises to man
With love hath overflowed.
Can living faith, or perfect trust
Spring from ourselves? Or can
They be upon our hearts impressed
By any power of man?
Now is the time when all who will
Faith's precious jewel claim,
God will in them His Word fulfill,
And free them from all blame.
Faith is the rod by which we're tried,
Hope the immortal crown,
For those who in the truth abide,
The evil life lay down.
And charity shall crown the whole
With her eternal light,
And all the universe control
In equity and right.
Words cannot tell what faith hath done;
Eternity will show
The crowns of victory faith hath won
By her unerring glow.

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